



NEHRU  
BAL PUSTAKALAYA





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**MULK RAJ ANAND**

*Illustrated by*  
**RUPRECHT HALLER**



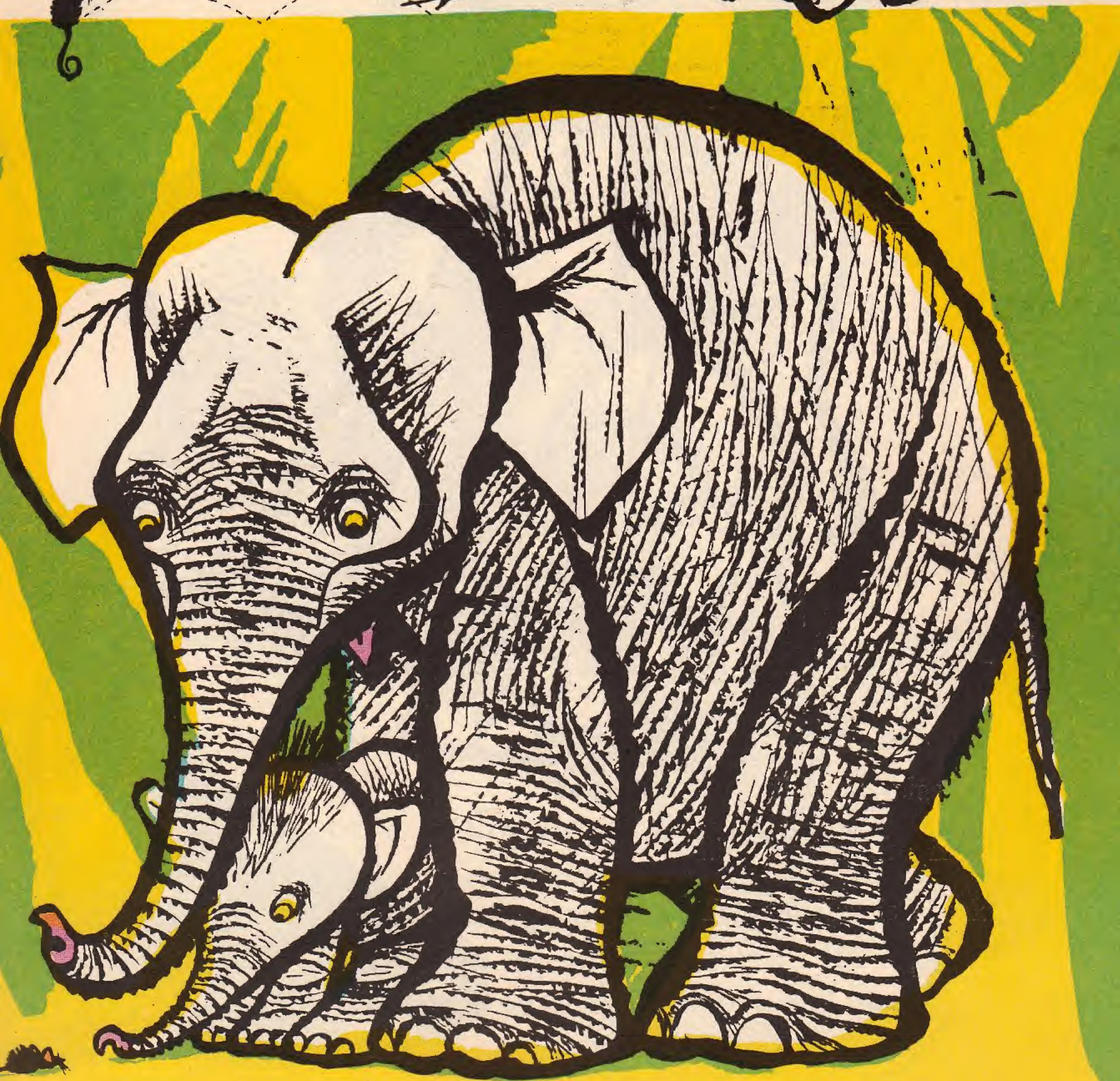


I am Mora, a jungle baby.  
My father gave me the nickname 'Pachy'.  
My mother took good care of me.  
When I was born she trumpeted to let the jungle know.  
And when I grew bigger, she was my teacher.  
The very first lesson was about mice.  
Mother saw a mouse washing his face.  
And she cried,  
"Look out, Pachy!  
"He will run into your tender nose with his scratchy  
little feet!"  
As she saw him come very near me, she cried,  
"Run! Save yourself!"





I saw him then and I just got  
away in time.







The next thing I learnt was how to drink water.

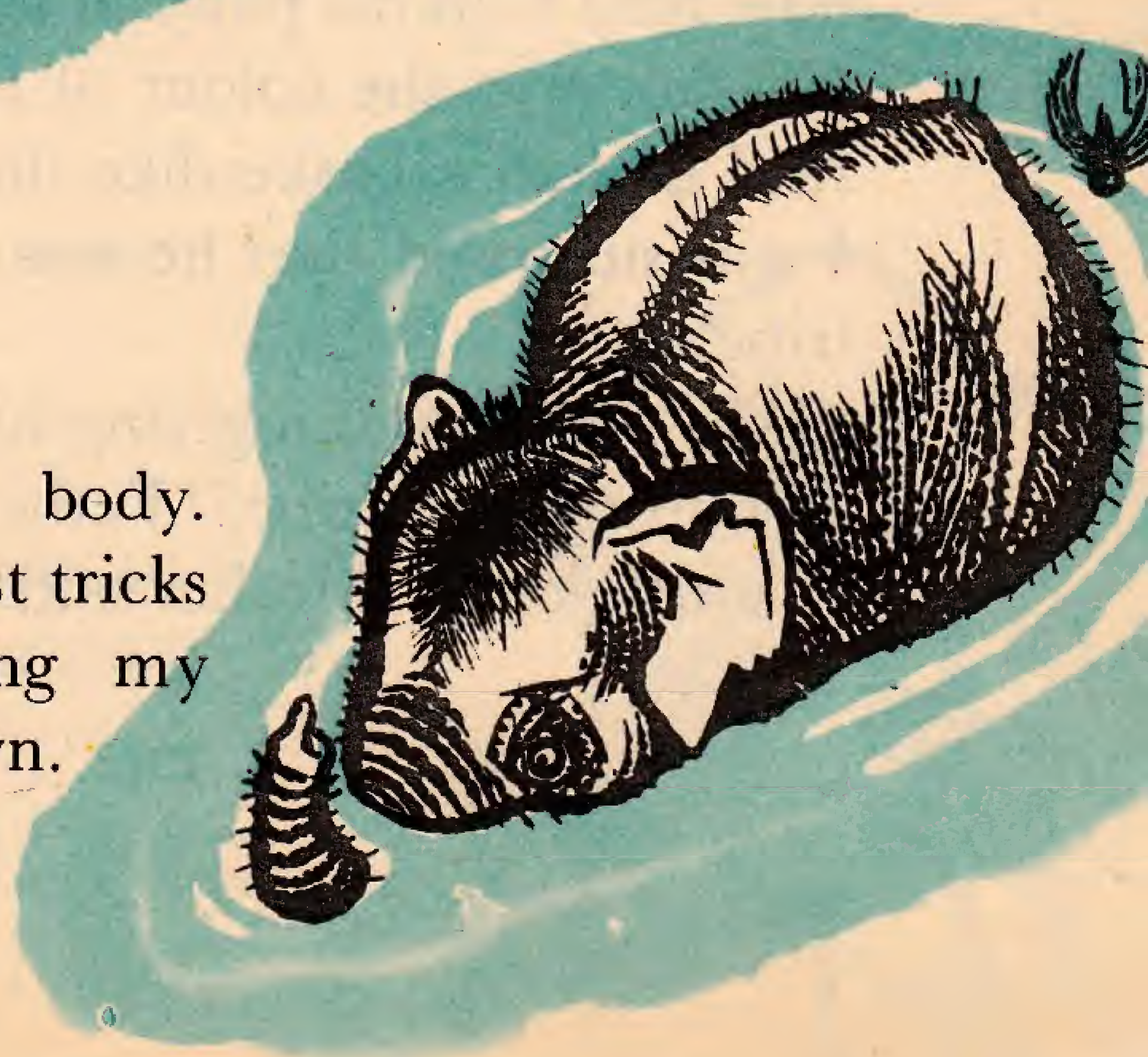
I swung my long nose up and down, and lo! the water came up my trunk. Then I learnt how to have a shower-bath.





Washing oneself on the outside is like washing oneself inside. So it seemed to me. Because I use the same long nose to drink water and to throw

water all over my body. Anyhow, one of the best tricks I learnt was to swing my long nose up and down.





Then came the most difficult lesson of all.

I learnt about creatures called elephant-hunters.

Do you know what elephant-hunters do in the jungle?

They catch baby elephants and take them far, far, away from their mothers and fathers.

If there is a breeze in the jungle, our elephant tribe can smell these monsters.

And we run away and hide.

But if there is no breeze these cunning monsters take baby elephants by surprise.

One day I was eating dinner with my father and mother.

I heard a branch break and looked up.

And...

Who do you think was there?

A strange creature.

He stood on only two legs and his forepaws were high up in the air, holding a long steel trunk.

It seemed to me that he had taken off his trunk and now held it in his paws to hit me with.

His face was the colour of Father's pink tongue.

And he had a basket-like thing on his head.

I was surprised that he was riding on a member of our tribe.

"Why is our cousin giving him a ride?"

"Traitor to our tribe," Father said.

"Come along," Mother said.

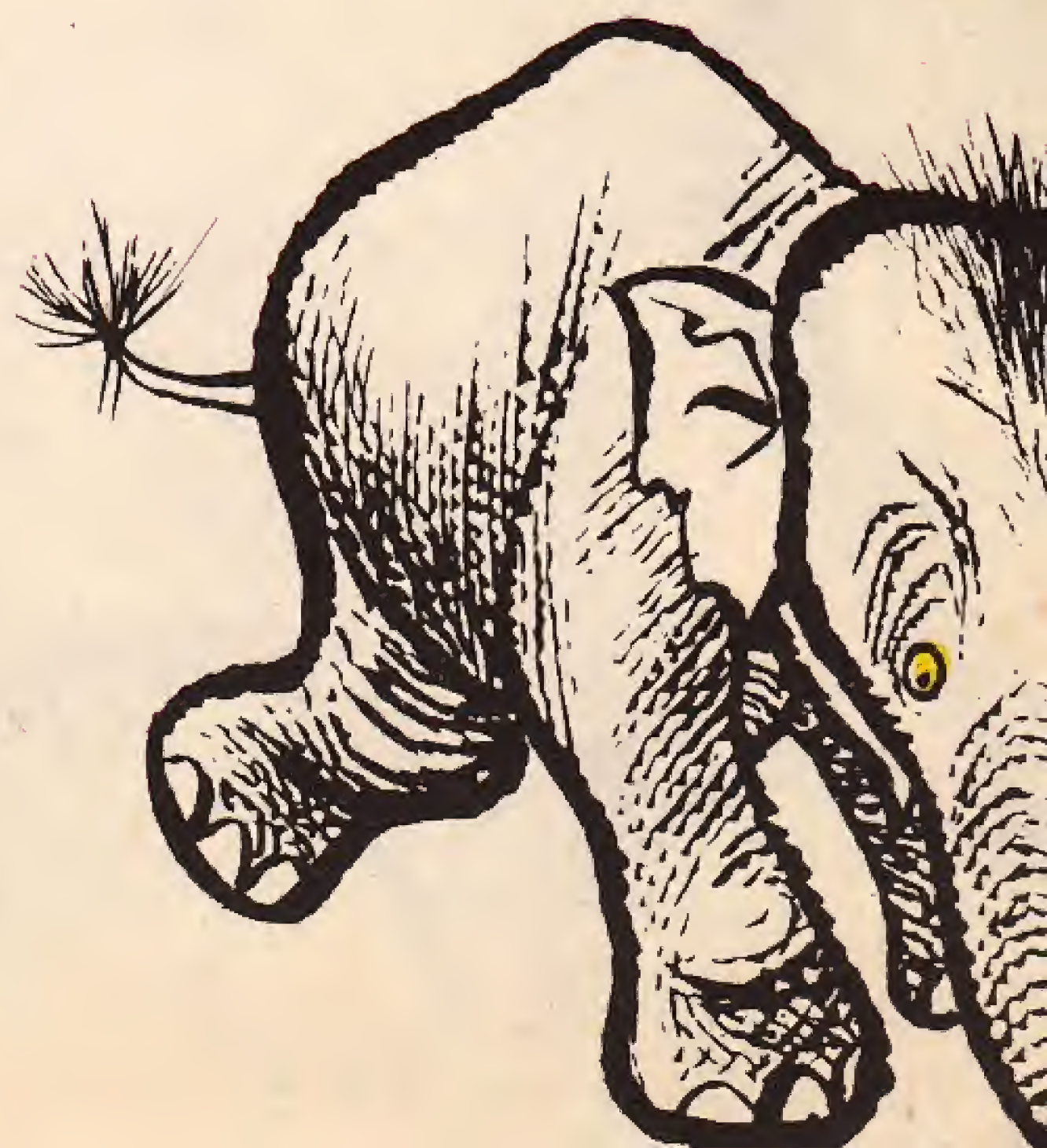





“That’s an elephant-hunter.  
“Hurry!”

I screamed and ran as fast as  
I could.

But I had eaten an enormous  
dinner so I got stuck between  
two trees.







“Mother,” I squealed.  
My mother ran back and saw  
my plight.  
She butted into me.  
It hurt dreadfully.  
‘Bing!’ she crashed into me.  
But my body was still stuck between  
the two trees.  
Then Father came and ‘Bang!’  
He bashed into Mother.











And 'Bang!' Mother bashed into me.

And...

Pushed right through I fell on my nose,  
turned a somersault and began to run.

Mother was behind me and kept up my  
courage with soft, tender words.

"Go on, my son. Quick!"

I could not hear Father's footsteps.

I wanted to look back, but Mother urged  
me on.





My uncles and aunts were running ahead.  
They had knocked down bushes and trees.  
And that made a clear path for me.  
I ran and ran and ran.  
After a while I found myself alone.  
Even Mother was not there.  
I stopped and saw that she was standing with her head  
turned back, waiting for Father.  
Then something awful happened.  
Something whizzed through the air above me.  
I stood trembling with fear in my heart.  
And it was as I had thought.  
The man with the steel trunk had shot my father straight  
through his heart!  
Then I saw my father topple over into the scrub.  
I heard him trumpet twice.  
And then he lay still.  
My mother squealed.  
And I did nothing.  
I wanted to cry, but could not utter a sound.  
I guess I was afraid.  
I could not even walk towards my mother.  
Then, at last, my mouth opened and a sound came out.  
“Mother,” I cried.  
Mother heard this and came towards me.









She gently rubbed my head with her long nose.  
I nuzzled softly against her.  
And she kissed me and said, "Mora, my son, your  
father is dead. Let's hurry away or—"  
Just then I saw the hunter lower his smoking steel



trunk and urge the traitorous cousin elephant forward. I also heard him say, "What a price this cow elephant and her son will bring if we can take them alive!"

So we ran, I in front and Mother hard on my heels.

This time we escaped with our lives.

We came to the edge of a lake where there was tall, lush grass.

I was hungry and ate my fill.

But Mother did not touch any food for three days.

She hugged me tight and shed large tears.

Large tears trickled down from my eyes too.

And then Mother told me about the cruelty of the evil creature, the hunter.

She also told me about elephants who lived in cities and villages and worked for men.

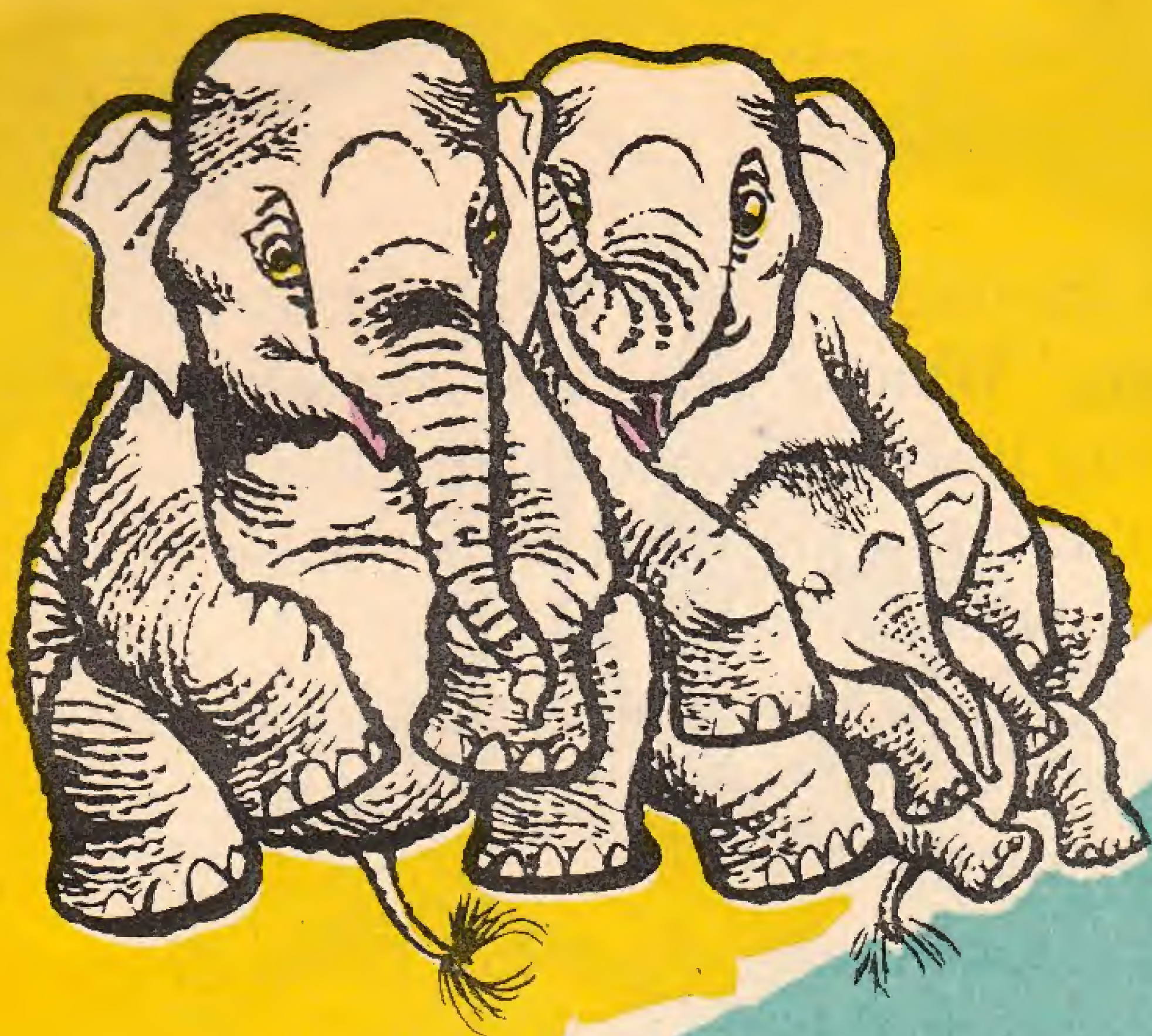
And she taught me how to look after myself, to hear but not be heard, to see but not be seen—and to THINK.

She said that the elephant tribe was famous in the world for its wisdom.

And she told me that when I grew up I would have to be kind to the weak, clever and courageous and be able to get food for myself.







In the herd which lived by the lake  
I had many friends.

I played various games with them.  
We liked turning somersaults.

We also played leap-frog.

But sometimes we quarrelled and  
chased one another.

When we tired of games and were  
hungry, we ate together and gave  
one another titbits : lovely shoots,







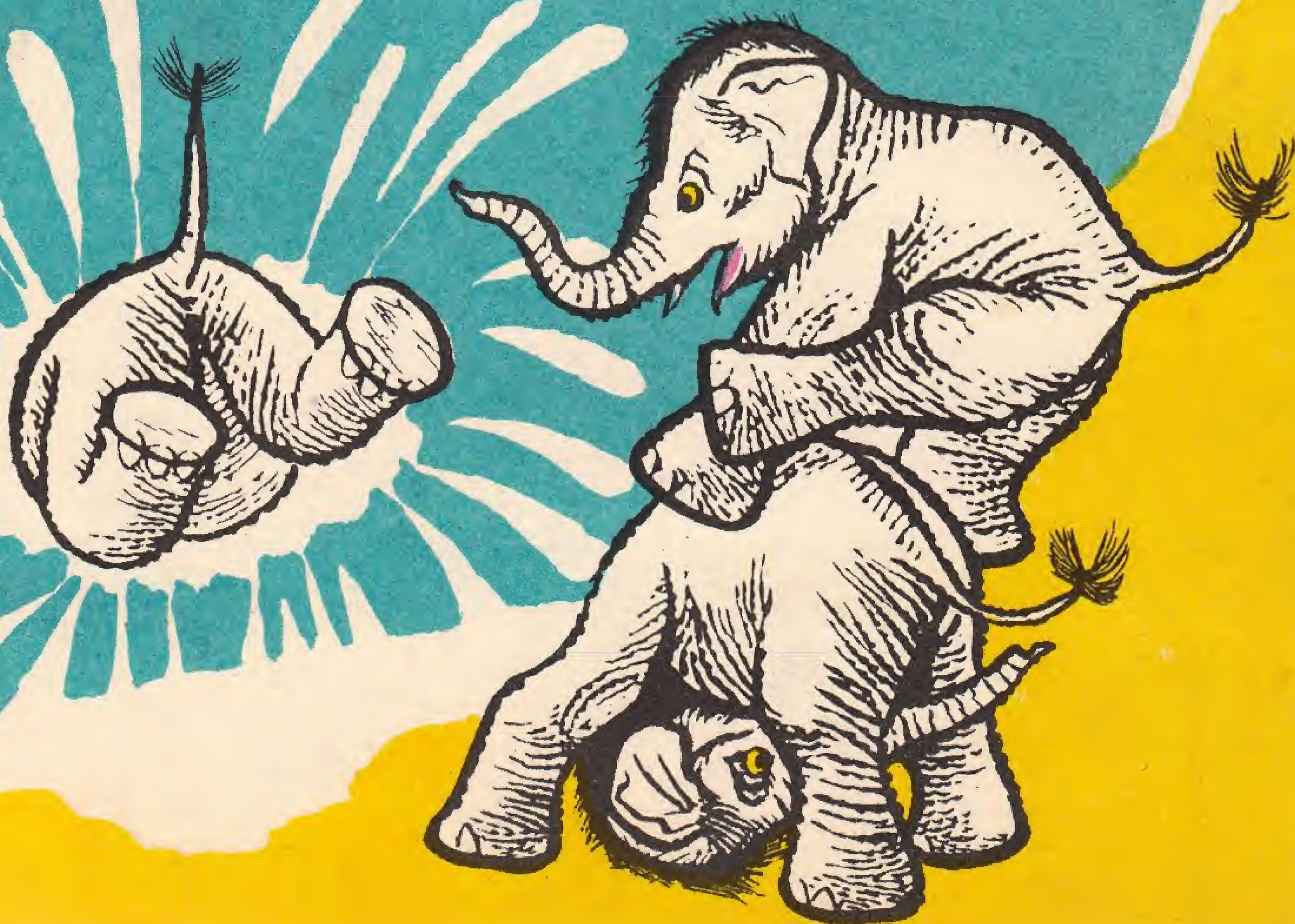
coconuts and bananas.

Then we sang together, till we were hoarse.

Our mothers began to feel that we could take care of ourselves and would go away to visit relations for days on end.

The years passed and I grew up.

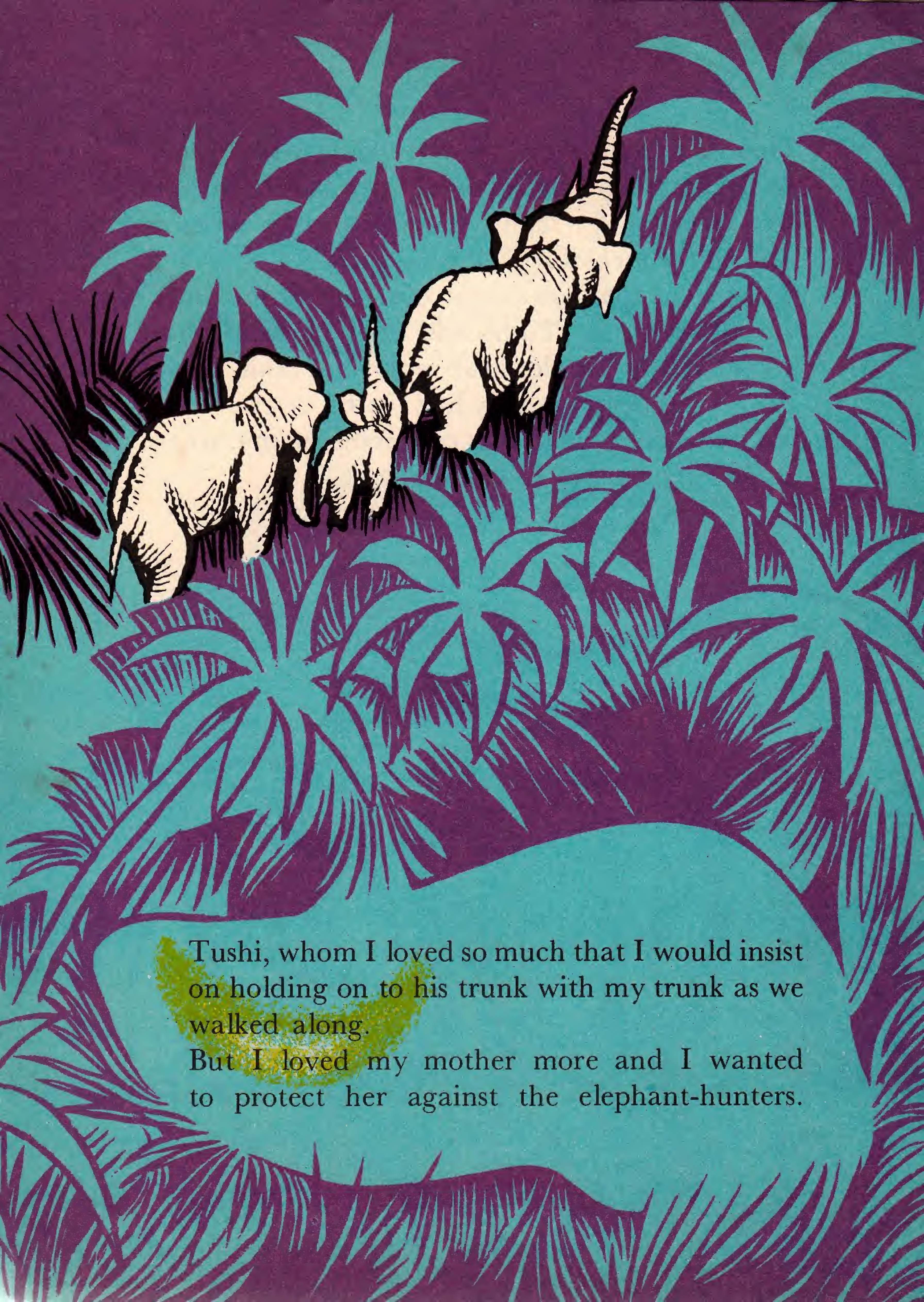
My mother had left me in the care of Uncle











Tushi, whom I loved so much that I would insist on holding on to his trunk with my trunk as we walked along.

But I loved my mother more and I wanted to protect her against the elephant-hunters.



One day Mother and I were going with Uncle Tushi to the marriage feast of one of my cousins in Mysore. We travelled by night, so as not to be seen, and hid among the rocks during the day. I was so happy that I wanted to sing all the time. But both Uncle Tushi and Mother were afraid that some hunter would hear my voice and discover us. And it happened as they had feared. We reached the outskirts of Srirangapatna, where there is the old palace of Tipu Sultan.













My mother had told me of the brave deeds of Tipu.  
And I could not help singing, "Tipu, Tipu, Tipu!"  
My singsong was the undoing of us all.  
Suddenly we were face to face with a brown man in a



boat-like cap sitting on a howdah.  
Behind him there were several other hunters.  
The brown man shouted, "Catch them alive, specially  
the little one! We need him for the zoo."







Tushi, Mother and I wheeled around and crashed into the scanty bush behind the walls of Tipu's fort.

Behind us we could hear the shouts and cries of our hunters.

Tushi was in front of me.

Mother was behind me.

I was gasping for breath.

I thought I should try and run faster and get abreast







of Uncle Tushi.

And, for one moment, I forgot Mother and ran ahead.  
Then I realised how tired and frightened she must be  
and stopped to wait for her.  
I looked back.





I saw an awful sight.  
The hunters had surrounded  
her and were tying her with  
ropes.



She lifted her trunk and shouted, "Mora, Mora, my son."  
I could not sob, just as I had not been able to weep or  
utter a sound when my father had been shot by hunters,  
years ago.

I flapped my big ears to and fro to catch every sound  
that came from Mother's side. I put my forefeet on a  
boulder and stood listening intently.







A moment later I saw the brown hunter on the traitor elephant advancing towards me.

I looked at Tushi who now stood far away, waiting for us. With a pang in my heart I went towards him.



I knew that I would be the victim of every man until I was strong enough to protect myself.

I walked on, nervous, afraid but careful.

Suddenly there was a rustling in the grass near me.

I swung round.

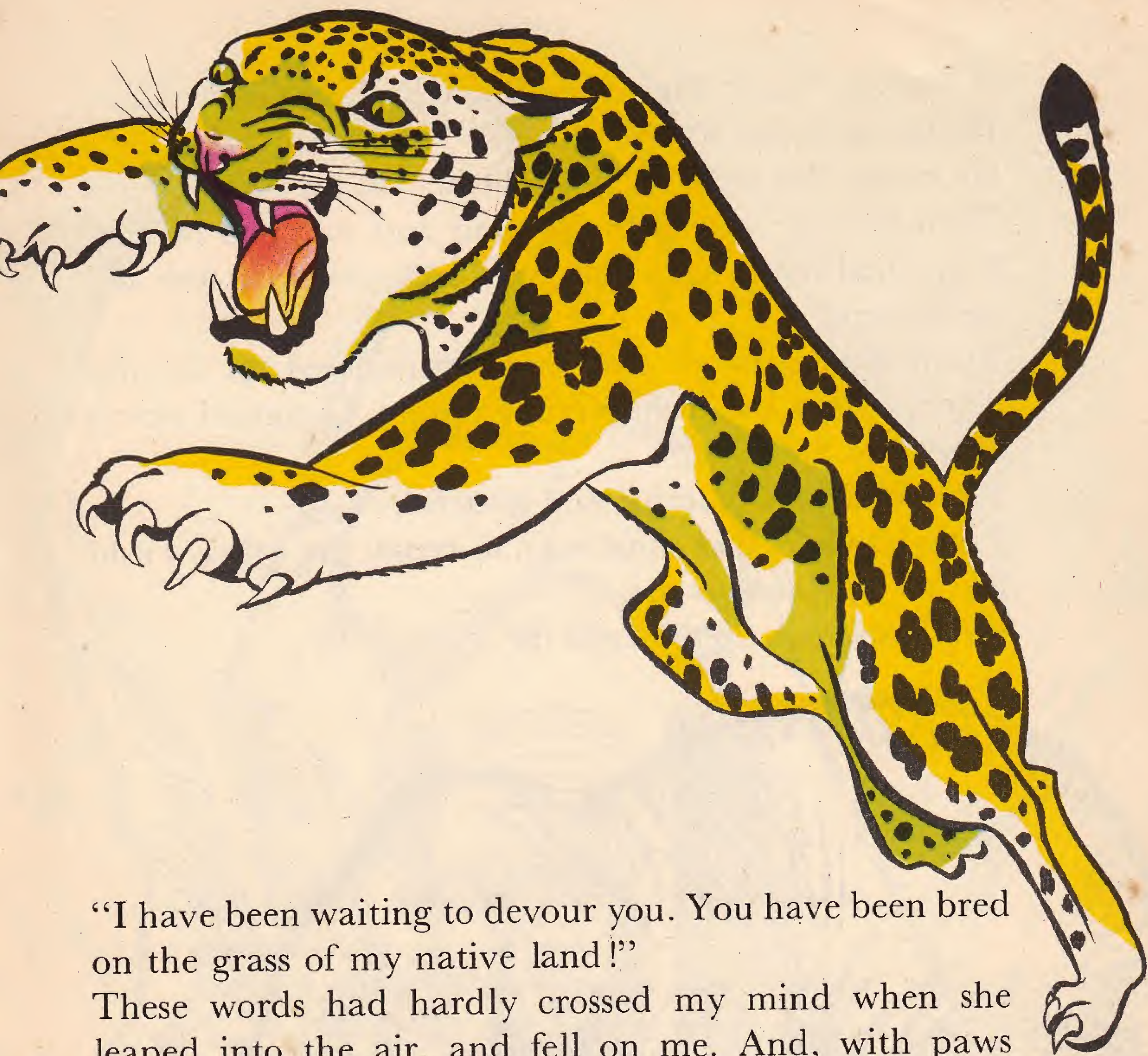
There, every tooth bared in a savage snarl, sat Sabra, the leopard, who had often made surprise visits to our home by the lake in Bangalore.

Sabra's green eyes glittered as she watched my trembling body.

"At last I have caught you!" she seemed to say.







“I have been waiting to devour you. You have been bred on the grass of my native land!”

These words had hardly crossed my mind when she leaped into the air, and fell on me. And, with paws extended, she struck me savagely with her steely claws. I squealed in terror and was turning to flee, when I decided to hold my ground and struck her with my trunk.

I heard a ‘thud’ as Sabra landed on the ground in front of me.

I was still shivering.

Then there was a fearful crash in the bush.

And a slate grey wall stood in front of me.





Perhaps he was missing my mother and could not bear the thought that she was caught.

He lumbered on without a backward glance.

Then, with a great trumpet of pain and rage, he suddenly disappeared from view.

I rushed forward.

I was anxious to find my protector.

In front of me gaped a wide space.

I looked into it stupidly.

Below me I could just make out Tushi's vast outline as he stamped and raged in the pit into which he had fallen.

I stood dolefully.

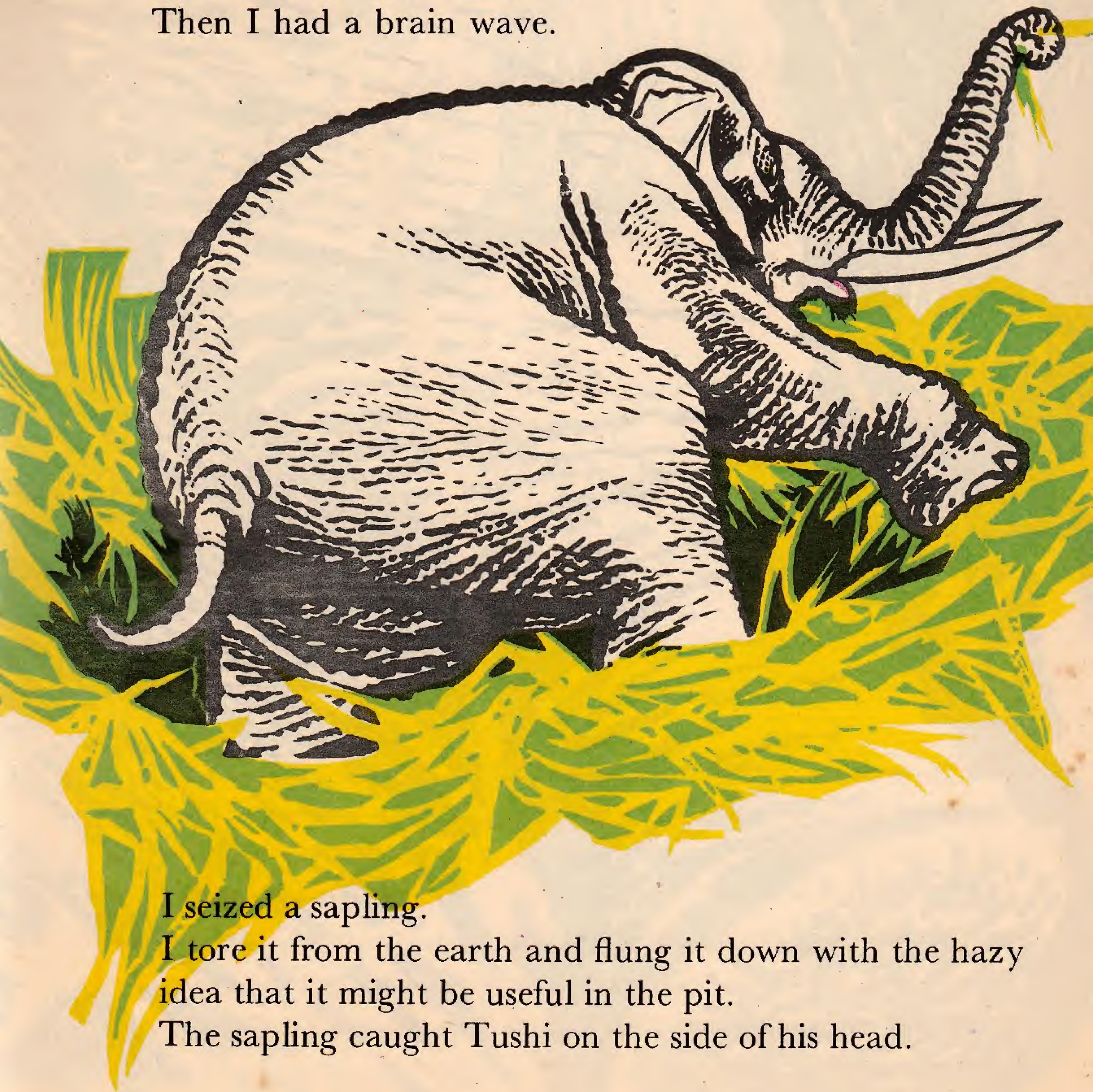
I could not understand why men made traps to get the free creatures of Elephant-Land into their grasp. Fortunately, the usual trap which men build to catch elephants was not there—this was only a crude one.







And the giant tusker, Uncle Tushi, was not hurt.  
I wondered how I could get Uncle Tushi out of this terrible trap.  
If only I had a fine long pair of tusks with which I could dig away the sides of the pit!  
Then I had a brain wave.



I seized a sapling.  
I tore it from the earth and flung it down with the hazy idea that it might be useful in the pit.  
The sapling caught Tushi on the side of his head.





Trumpeting with rage, he seized it in his trunk, whirled it round and round and stamped it under his feet.

I wandered around the edge of the pit for a while.

Suddenly I thought of a way to make Uncle Tushi comfortable in his prison.

A bed of branches and young trees would soothe him.

And, later I would try to think of something to help the tusker out of the pit.

Branch after branch and sapling after sapling I uprooted and flung down to Tushi.

The old elephant seemed furious at this rain of missiles. He pounded them beneath his enormous feet and trumpeted wildly.

And soon the edge of the pit above him grew nearer.

After an hour or so his tusks were level with the ground.

His trunk rose slowly above the ground.



I saw him come near me.

I stared at the miracle.

Tushi raised himself up.

Heaving his big hulk, his powerful trunk and tusks, he rose up till his four legs were on safe ground.

Then, with a final effort, he drew himself out of the pit.

“How did you, a little kid, think of this way of getting me out of the pit?”

I looked at his giant face and thought how happy my mother would have been to hear him speak thus.

“I worship you,” I said to Tushi.

“I wish to be as strong and powerful as you.”





“Mora, my son,” Tushi said. “I too was left all alone in the world when the hunters took away my father and mother to work in the timber-yards of Kerala. I saw that, after your father’s death, your mother would not be able to look after you. Women and children need protection. We men have to work and guard the freedom of the elephant tribe. I was a second father to you. But now you have learnt everything. The clever way in which you rescued me from the pit shows that you will do wonders. You will become the head of our panchayat. Go now, and wander over the seven earths, across the seven seas, and under the seven skies, and then come





back to our fold.”

“What a mighty elephant,” I thought, “full of wisdom and love!”

And I wanted to follow the giant tusker wherever he went.

And yet I wanted to be independent and live on my own.

Tushi then ambled away.

And I, deep in thought, walked off in the opposite direction.



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